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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY VISITORS FROM
DUSHANBE

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, EXEC, Embassy
Dushanbe.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) During an interagency meeting in Washington in January to elaborate the Tajikistan section of the policy document, "A Strategy for Central Asia," the Ambassador undertook to recommend names of key Tajik insiders who could be invited to Washington for low-profile but high-level conversations about economic reform and Tajikistan's upcoming presidential election in November 2006. A small core of "young reformers" with intimate ties to key officials who are also members of the First Family would ensure that any message is immediately and, we are quite certain, accurately communicated "to the very top."

THE INNER-INNER CIRCLE

¶2. (C) Two family members are essential: First Brother-in-Law and Chairman of Orien Bank Hasan Sadulloyev, and the President's uncle (or cousin) Presidential Economic Adviser Matlubhon Davlatov (septel). They both have an unmediated direct and constant line to President Rahmonov. Also in this group, but not a family member, and so once slightly removed, is Chairman of the National Bank Muradali Alimardonov who has presided over Tajikistan's credible steps toward banking reform and who serves as President Rahmonov's major domo (and personal financier) for major ceremonial events. Their teenage sons are close buddies.

TWO KEY YOUNG REFORMERS IN THE INNER-INNER CIRCLE

¶3. (C) Two "young reformers" are part of this inner circle because they are Sadulloyev protégés - Chairman of the State Savings Bank (with a Johns Hopkins PhD) Mahmamin Mahmaminov, a soft-spoken but increasingly powerful Pamiri who in the one year he has been in his current job has taken major steps (with Presidential protection) to curb the massive corruption in the State Pension System, and TadaZ Deputy Director (but the real political power there) Sherali Kabirov, who has stopped the hemorrhaging of TadaZ profits to secret and private off-shore accounts and redirected them into the state budget. To round out this group, as a supporting but essential actor, would be Sadulloyev's young Executive Assistant and personal English translator Dalar Shukrov.

OTHERS DEEMED ESSENTIAL WHOM WE KNOW LESS WELL

¶4. (C) While researching this initiative, two other names have repeatedly come to our attention: Chairman of the Presidential Financial Control Committee (which Davlatov formerly headed) Abdujobor Shirinov, and State Adviser for Personnel Abdujobor Azizov. The latter is especially powerful because he is the gate-keeper for all senior personnel appointments around the country and, thus, is totally trusted by the President.

MAYBE ONE MORE?

¶5. (C) Our best sources often named Tajikistan's newly appointed PermRep to the United Nations Sirojiddin Aslov. In our experience, his diffidence seemed to suggest he was a relatively minor player, but on the other hand he is Dangaran, possibly a Family Cousin, and always tried to be helpful to Embassy Dushanbe when he was First Deputy Foreign Minister.

¶6. (C) Curiously, the name of Tajikistan's Ambassador to the United States Hamrohon Zaripov did not come up. He has always seemed to us to understand, at least in general, economic reform, and seems to understand the ins and outs of Washington. But he may possibly be seen as a little too ambitious to be a fully trusted and vetted "ultimate insider." Also, he's not Family.

FAMILY IS REALITY, AND WE CAN MAKE IT WORK FOR US

¶7. (C) That brings us to the issue of Family. Although it's distasteful to us, and can be dangerously counter-productive (e.g., the Shevardnadzes, Akayevs, and now Karimovs), it is simply the post-Soviet reality in Tajikistan. We can distance ourselves because of our principles, or we can work to co-opt them. We strongly recommend the latter course of action, especially because this inner circle includes Western-oriented

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reformers like Mahmaminov and, we believe, Kabirov.

APRIL WORLD BANK MEETINGS WOULD BE OPTIMAL

¶8. (C) The natural timing for U.S. meetings with these key insiders would be on the margins, or for a few days immediately after, the annual World Bank and IMF meetings in Washington in April. Alimardonov and Davlatov will definitely attend. It would be no stretch at all to ensure Mahmaminov attends. If he understood the purpose, Sadulloyev would willingly attend.

¶9. (C) It might take a bit of work, but we are certain that we could ensure TadaZ's Kabirov also attends, if for no other reason than he told us February 18 during a private bowling party he has never been to the United States, but very much wants to meet with leaders of the U.S. aluminum industry to begin to build contacts to balance the predatory maneuverings of RusAl's Oleg Deripaska whom it increasingly seems Tajikistan distrusts because of his high-profile sucking up to the Karimov family in Uzbekistan. (NOTE: The Swiss-registered but U.S. privately held company Glencor trades 70 percent of TadaZ's aluminum production, a 10 percent decrease from before because Hyundai now has a piece of the action. END NOTE.)

PRESENT THE INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVE

¶10. (C) Any senior U.S. Administration meetings with the core group should have two separate messages. The first would be easy and very well-received, and would set a feel-good tone. We would recommend a luncheon in the Secretary's Dining Room during which an approved version of the Secretary's Greater Central Asia Infrastructure Initiative would be presented, perhaps by Under Secretary Shiner. (The slides should be translated into Russian, and hard copies should be presented to the Tajik participants.) A brief drop-by by the Secretary herself, even for only five minutes, would be extremely well-received, and demonstrate our serious commitment to the bilateral relationship and to our respect for Tajikistan's place in Greater Central

Asia.

THE POLITICAL MESSAGE: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

¶11. (C) The second meeting should be about the upcoming Presidential election. We would leave it to Washington to determine the venue, but would suggest the Roosevelt Room in the West Wing of the White House, because of the enormous power and prestige of the U.S. Presidency. We thoroughly understand the constraints on his time, but a very brief, five-minute drop-by by President Bush would most certainly underscore the message in no uncertain terms and would be understood as a mark of highest-level interest. An alternative to the West Wing would be a luncheon in Blair House.

¶12. (C) This would be the slightly more difficult meeting, and the message would need to be carefully calibrated and presented with careful diplomatic gentility. We would be glad to work with Washington to elaborate the message, but the core elements would include the following:

¶13. (C, RELEASABLE TO TI) Begin proposed talking points:

-- We recognize Tajikistan, an increasingly important partner for Afghanistan, as a key state in Greater Central Asia.

-- Since 2000, Tajikistan has made remarkable progress recovering from the 1992-97 Civil War and getting the economy growing again. As you have seen from our Infrastructure Initiative presentation, we are with you.

-- Tajikistan generally has increasing respect in the international community, in large part thanks to President Rahmonov's "open-door" foreign policy and relatively moderate and progressive governance. We want that respect to grow.

-- We will not embarrass you by making demands we know your government cannot fulfill. Partners in a mature relationship do not do that to each other.

-- But as a friend of Tajikistan, we do want to make several recommendations that we believe will benefit Tajikistan internally, that will actually improve longer-term stability, and that will further improve your government's international

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image.

-- We will be frank and tell you we understand that President Rahmonov will win the November election, in part because he is truly respected for having established stability in the country following your tragic civil war.

-- We know President Rahmonov understands that events in Georgia, Ukraine, and even Kyrgyzstan occurred in recent years in part because of chronically weak economies and endemic corruption at the top levels of society.

-- We have noted with admiration President Rahmonov's attempts to build Tajikistan's economy and to rein in corruption, and we understand he is doing this in a most complex arena with competing interests.

-- Because President Rahmonov will win the November election, as friends of Tajikistan we want to recommend strongly that the election be conducted so that it meets international standards. President Rahmonov is strong enough that he can now afford this "luxury." If he does so, it would enormously increase his international prestige.

-- The steps we recommend would include equal and fair radio and TV broadcast time for all political parties, no matter how weak or strong they may be; provision for Tajik civil society organizations to serve as poll monitors; and - most important - absolute transparency in reporting accurate and honest vote tallies [known in Tajikistan as "protocols"] at the local and,

especially, district levels.

-- We ask that President Rahmonov make clear in public, long before the actual date of the election, that he will not tolerate local and district officials "over-fulfilling the plan," and that if they do so, they will face clear and certain consequences.

End proposed talking points.

¶14. (SBU) Embassy Dushanbe looks forward to working closely with Washington on this initiative. Please advise our next steps.

HOAGLAND